*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906 Telephone: (781) 338-3000

## TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  *Commissioner* |  |

September 30, 2016

Daniel Warwick Superintendent Springfield Public Schools 1550 Main Street Springfield, MA O1103

Dear Superintendent Warwick:

As you know, I am deeply concerned about the status of the educational program at the High School of Commerce. The reason for this letter is to inform you that I am allowing you until October 31, 2016 to develop and submit a plan that gives me confidence that this school will move from underperforming to a high performing school. If the plan you submit does not give me confidence that the school will provide for significantly better outcomes for students, then I am committed to using the means at my disposal - including, but not limited to, state receivership for this school - to secure a better educational future for the students at the High School of Commerce.

The trajectory of progress at the High School of Commerce leaves me unconvinced that the

conditions are in place that will lead to successful school turnaround. The fact that less than four­ in-ten students are proficient in mathematics and the four-year graduation rate is less that 50 percent are illustrative of my concerns. Without expeditious and dramatic action, it is unlikely this school will be able to both build on the modest progress to date and dramatically increase the pace of improvement.

Below are some specific elements that would give me confidence that the plan for the school is likely to succeed. These elements are based on successful turnaround efforts in schools in the Commonwealth and across the nation. These elements include districts establishing the following conditions and developing relevant systems to enable:

* School leaders to:
  + Establish the school calendar and schedule
  + Hire and dismiss staff and be exempted from bidding and bumping staffing restrictions
  + Exercise authority over an agreed-upon school-based budget
  + Determine the school's curriculum and programming
* Staff to receive a minimum of 15 additional days for professional development
* An extension of the school day or year to allow for more teacher collaboration and/or student instructional time
* A performance based compensation system to be established that:
  + Provides a career ladder for teachers with opportunities for the most effective teachers to take on leadership roles without having to leave the classroom
  + Eliminates the steps and lanes and longevity-based pay model
  + Considers individual effectiveness, professional growth, and student academic growth as key factors
  + Creates an affordable model by compensating teachers as professionals and moving away from an hourly pay model
* Working conditions to be established at the school level
* The use of a dispute resolution process that ensures that issues relating to working conditions and the turnaround plan are resolved quickly and fairly

In addition to these elements, I further urge the district to take this opportunity to revisit all other autonomies and flexibilities available in the law (G.L. c. 69, § lJ(d) https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1J), and identify any additional conditions that would support the district in taking the necessary steps to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students at the school.

Please contact Russell Johnston [(RJohnston@doe.mass.edu](mailto:(RJohnston@doe.mass.edu) or 781-338-3564) with any questions. Please also feel free to reach out to Joan Tuttle, ESE's liaison to Springfield Public Schools, for any assistance that she can provide to support you in this process.

It is my hope that Springfield commits to a decisive plan for significant and dramatic change. We can and must do better for the students of the High School of Commerce, and we have a professional and moral obligation to use the tools at our disposal to secure rapid improvement for their benefit. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Cc: Mayor Dominic Sarno

*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906 Telephone: (781) 338-3000

## TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.  *Commissioner* |  |

November 9, 2016

Superintendent Daniel J. Warwick

Springfield Public Schools

1550 Main Street

Springfield, MA 01103

Dear Superintendent Warwick:

I am writing to recognize the efforts of Springfield Public Schools, the Springfield School Committee, and the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership, Inc. ("SEZP"), with the support and partnership of the Springfield Educators Association, to utilize an in-district receivership model to dramatically improve outcomes for all students at The High School of Commerce ("Commerce").

Under Massachusetts General Laws, c. 69, § IJ, you, as superintendent, are authorized to select and appoint an external receiver to operate the school. You have signified that you have selected the SEZP to redesign Commerce and assume management for the day to day operation of the school beginning with the 2017-2018 school year. The Springfield School Committee voted on October 20, 2016 to approve your recommendation to add Commerce to the Springfield Empowerment Zone. That decision, coupled with the vote of the Board of the SEZP on October 21, 2016 to assume management of the school, indicates to me that the conditions have been established, including collective bargaining agreements, to ensure a rapid improvement in student outcomes. As a result, Commerce's accountability designation of "Under Review" will now be changed to "Level 4".

As of this official notice that you are no longer under consideration for Level 5, the statutory requirements for a school continuing in Level 4 status apply (G.L. c. 69, §IJ(l)). This means you will need to convene a Local Stakeholder Group within 30 days (i.e., by December 9, 2016). The Local Stakeholder Group must submit its recommendations for the turnaround plan to you no later than 45 days after their convening (i.e., by January 23, 2016), and the first draft of the proposed Level 4 Turnaround Plan must be submitted to me by February 22, 2016. Please remember that these dates are the maximum allowable estimates under the law, and the district may progress through the turnaround plan development process more quickly if you choose to do so. As with all schools that remain in Level 4 after three years, the plan must be renewed each year.

I acknowledge the hard work of many individuals who collaborated to create this unique opportunity for the students of Commerce, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the educational opportunities for students in Springfield.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Cc: Chris Gabrieli, Chair, Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership, Inc.

Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Lise Zeig, Associate Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Ventura Rodriguez, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Lauren Woo, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Susan Berglund, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education